

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

"Your Mission, Now that you have accepted it. . . "
Charles Francis Adams in England

"None of our generals, nor Grant himself, did us better or more trying service than he in his forlorn outpost of London."
James Russell Lowell

Standard: III. People, Places, and Environment
VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
VII. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
IX. Global Connections
X. Civic Ideals and Practices

Grade Level: 9–12

Objectives: The student will:
● Compare and contrast primary documents
● Evaluate the diplomatic efforts of Charles Francis Adams in England
● Assess the implications of England's involvement in the U.S. Civil War

Time: 1 class period

Materials: Documents: A Considerable Influence at Work
If I had Followed the course of my Colleagues. . . "
They do not comprehend the connection with slavery
This Great Political Disease
The True Division Becomes Perceptible
More Good than All Our Former Victories
This Act of Drama is Over

Exercises: *Your Mission*
Charles Francis Adams' Mission

Procedures:

Setting the Stage

Charles Francis Adams was the son of John Quincy Adams, grandson of John Adams, and the third Adams to serve as U.S. Minister to England. Historians reveal that Charles Francis possessed the acumen and skills of his grandfather and father AND was more comfortable in diplomatic settings than his relatives. Also, his son, Henry, who was to become a well-known historian, served as private secretary to his father while in England. So, even a fourth generation of the Adams' family was involved in postings to England.

- 1.** Explain to students that they will portray Charles Francis Adams, the U.S. Minister to Great Britain from 1861–1868. He was sent by President Lincoln to represent the interests of the Union during the American Civil War.
- 2.** Divide the class into four (4) groups (or more but some groups will work with the same material). Each group will “be” Charles Francis Adams.
- 3.** Provide copies of the exercise, *Your Mission* to the groups.
- 4.** Assign each group ONE of the objectives (a-d) Adams was to accomplish while in England.
- 5.** Provide a set of the documents (all are letters written by Charles Francis Adams) to each group.
- 6.** Allow enough time for students to read and discuss the letters. They should read the letters in chronological order.

Option 1

Have students record their findings for the assigned objectives on the exercise, *Charles Francis Adams' Mission*. Each group should share its results with the others, completing the chart as a class. Discuss the students’ results.

Option 2

Student groups will compile their information in one letter to send to Secretary of State William Seward. Each group will write one short paragraph addressing their specific objective. Combine the paragraphs for viewing, whether on an overhead or another type of projection. As a class, read the entire letter as it is formatted. Does it provide a viable descriptive letter for the Secretary of State? Does the letter emulate the style of Adams?

Questions for Either Option:

- a.** What do the assessments of Adam's objectives reveal about the involvement of England in the American Civil War?
- b.** Comment on the efforts of the United States to keep Great Britain from involvement in the Civil War.
- c.** What impact would British recognition of Confederacy have had on the future of the United States?
- d.** What is revealed about the impact of American slavery in Great Britain?
- e.** What do Adams' letters tell us about efforts by the Confederacy to gain recognition by Great Britain?
- f.** What evidence is provided about the possible economic impact of the war on Great Britain?
- g.** Describe Charles Francis Adams' diplomatic style as evidenced from the letters.
- h.** What pressures would he have felt while representing the United States in London? ■